



# Land and Water Equity in the San Joaquin Valley

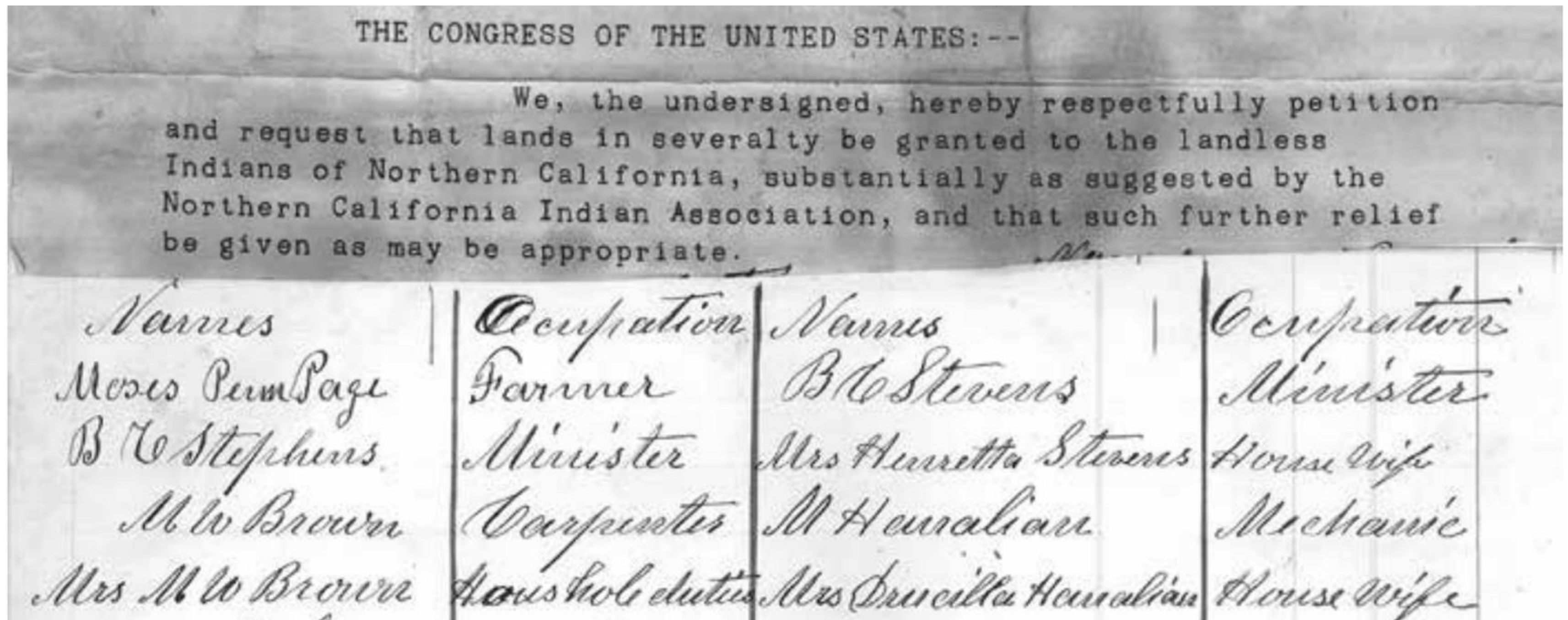


# **what we're discussing today:**

- 1. Short history of CA agriculture and land theft**
- 2. Water districts and why they matter**
- 3. What and where are disadvantaged communities**
- 4. Peering into the future**



# California's history is marred by unratified treaties



One of the many petitions sent to Congress as requested by the Northern California Indian Association.





**...and a history of  
dispossession**

**(a very incomplete, deeply omissive list of some of the ways people and their access to land has been violated by the State)**

- 1852- Treaties left unratified and placed under seal of secrecy
- 1853- The Governor of the State of California declares extermination of all Indians beginning a 50 year genocide
- 1856- The State of California issued a bounty of \$0.25 per Indian scalp
- 1860- The State of California increased the bounty to \$5.00 per Indian scalp
- 1862- The Homestead Act accelerated the settlement of the western territory by granting adult heads of families 160 acres of surveyed public land for a minimal filing fee and five years of continuous residence on that land.
- 1879- A constitutional amendment to limited land ownership to aliens of the "white race or of African descent"
- 1882- Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
- 1913 - Alien Land Law denying Japanese families the right to own land.
- 1920 and 1927 -Alien Land Law tightened to bar Asian immigrants, their American-born children, and corporations run by Asian immigrants from leasing and owning land.
- 1940s to today- Heirs Property Laws



# 1800s



California has been commercially farming ever since statehood in 1850. The SJ Valley consisted of large ranches and farms which grew wheat, barley, and other grain crops with rain for irrigation. During the 1850s-1880s, growers and farmers employed a limited farmworker population, but implemented the use of tractors and mechanized harvesting processes.

# 1900-1950s



Farming operations expanded in the early 1900s to include the cultivation of fruits and nuts. Irrigation, the availability of pesticides, and the demand of specialty crops gave rise to an increased demand for labor. Growers benefited from cheap foreign labor as Chinese, Japanese, Sikh, Filipino, Southern European, and Mexican workers came to California to fill the labor demand, which continued to grow in the early 1900s. The Dust Bowl pushed yet more migrants into the center of CA.



# 1950s



In the early 1940's the Bracero Program was created under the Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement. Initially set up to fill the labor shortage created by WWII, it remained in place for more than 20 years. Groundwater, which had supplied less than 10 percent of irrigated acreage in 1902, accounted for over 50 percent of the acreage by 1950

# 1960s



In the 1960s the Union Organizing movement ignited the flame for negotiated labor contracts and reduced pesticide exposure for workers. The 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act was passed permitting farmworkers to collectively bargain through the United Farm Workers. By the 1970s, irrigation districts—public corporations run by local landowners and empowered to tax and issue bonds to purchase or construct, maintain, and operate irrigation works—were the leading water suppliers.



# San Joaquin Valley Disadvantaged Communities

Over the course of California history, the people who provide the agricultural labor of our state have been relegated to small communities often anchored by a packing house. These communities are almost entirely reliant on groundwater, as they are landless residents left bereft through the history of agricultural water supply development.







# What is a 'DAC' or disadvantaged community?

**1995**

Safe Drinking Water Act and CA Water Code (§ 79505.5) from 2002 lists communities as "Disadvantaged" if the median household income was less than 80 percent of the statewide median.

**2012**

Amendment to the California Global Warming Solutions of 2006, requiring 25 percent of proceeds from the State's Cap and Trade program to benefit disadvantaged communities as defined by CalEnviroScreen.

**2014**

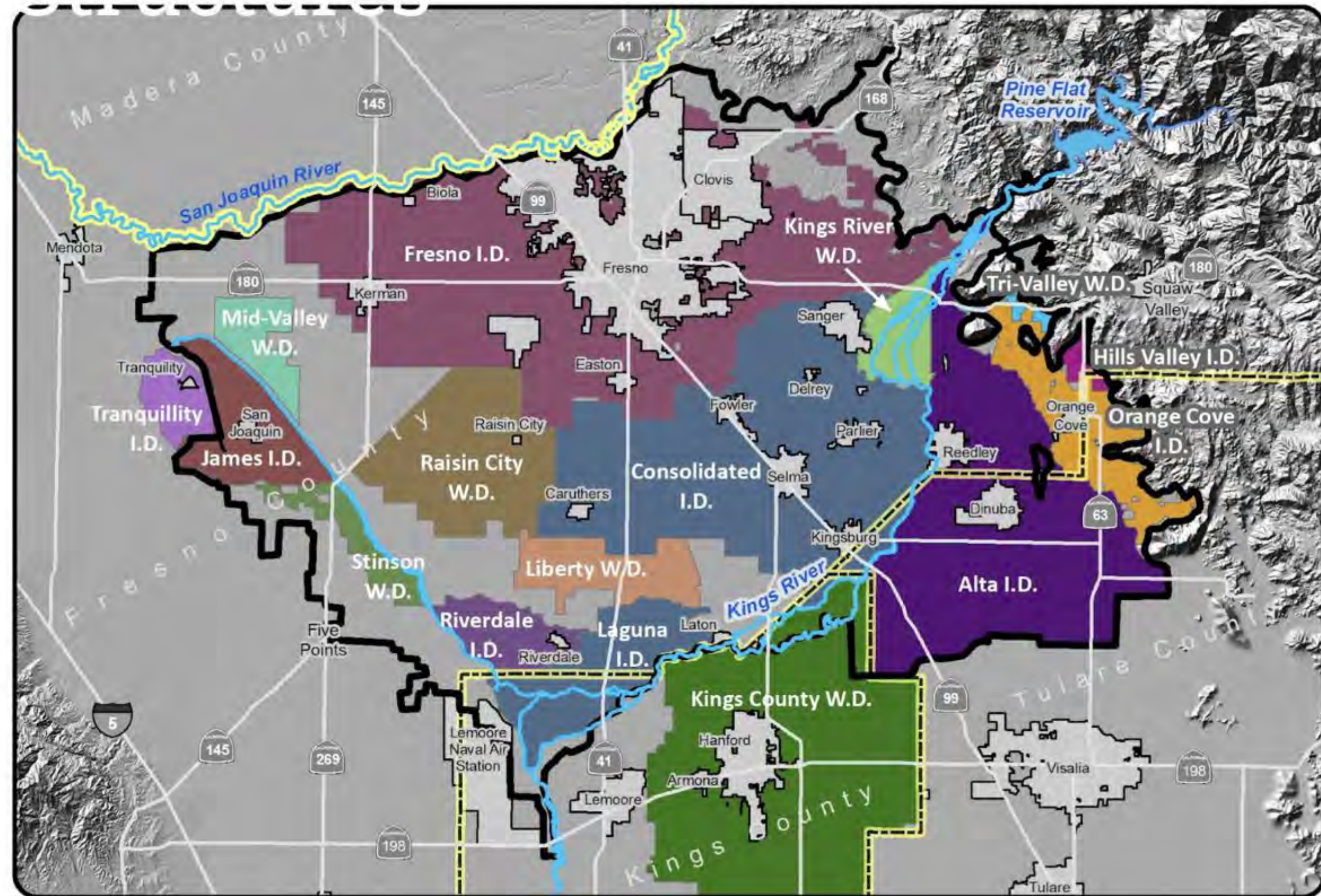
Prop 1 Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act funds IRWM grant program with funds for DACs

**2021**

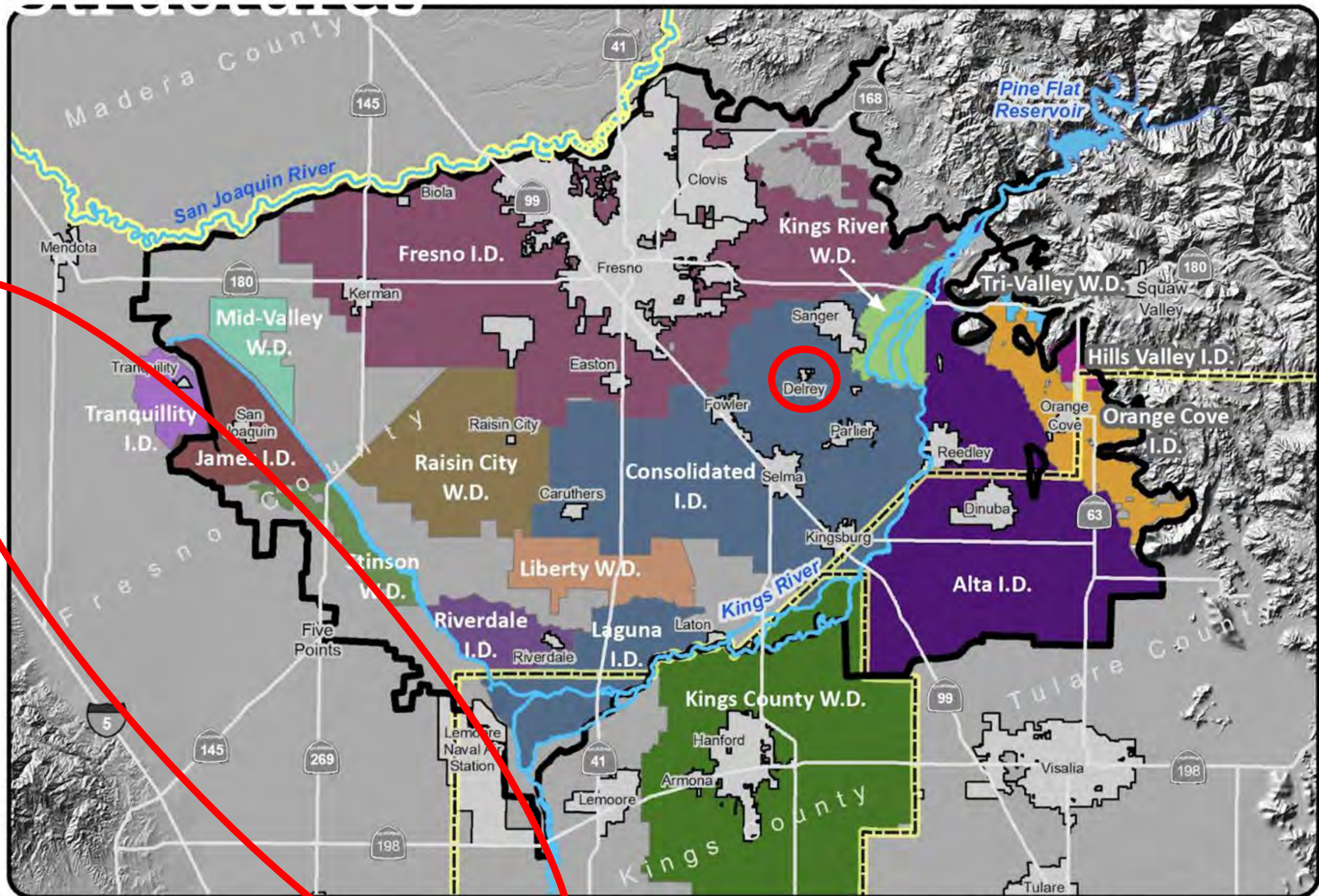
Cal Enviro Screen 4.0 released



**Within  
this blob  
are small  
water  
systems  
serving  
DACs**





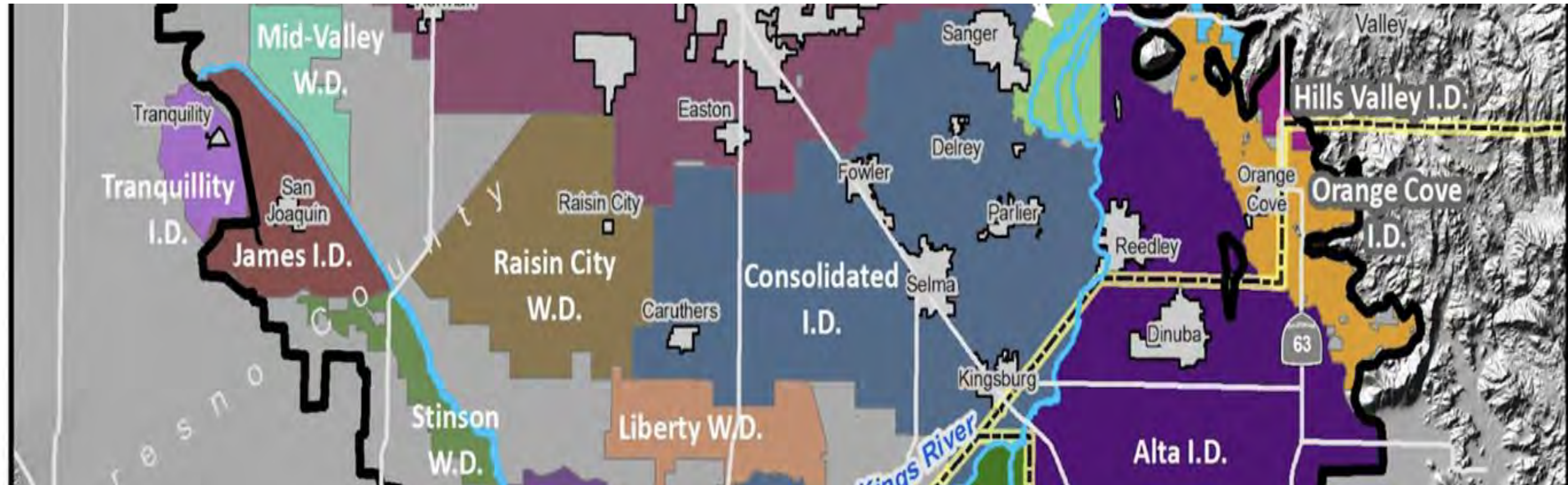




**Westlands  
Water District  
spans 600,000  
acres (about 1/2  
size of New  
York City) with  
less than 600  
landowners.**



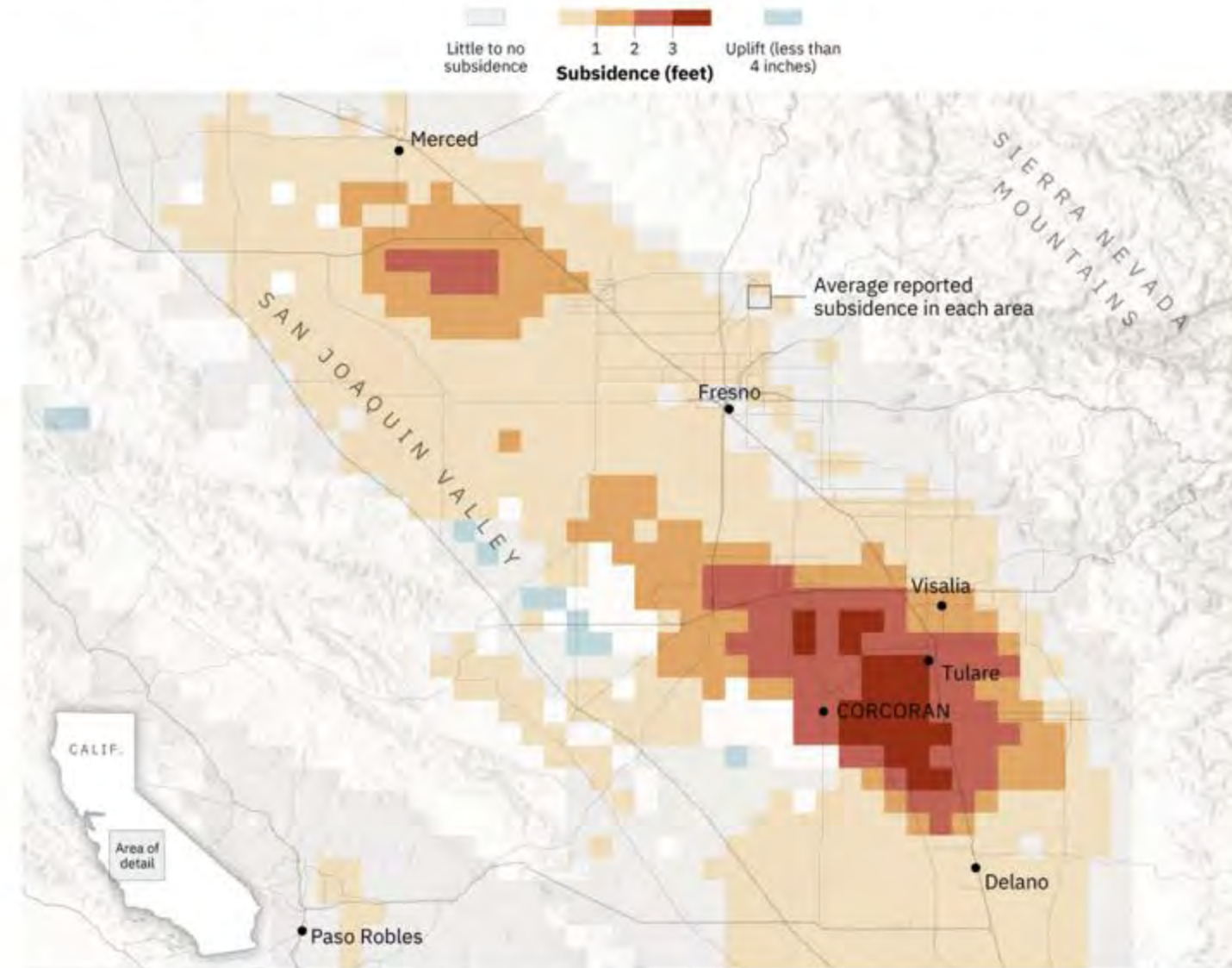




**Our governance structures are a reflection of an antiquated approach to human and natural resource management**



Some parts of the San Joaquin Valley are estimated to have sunk more than four feet in total since 2015.



Note: Data shows reported vertical ground displacement between June 13, 2015, and June 1, 2020. Due to gaps in spatial coverage, this map shows the approximate subsidence using the average of all reported values within each square grid area. Reported values are not evenly distributed within each square, and each square may have a different number of measurements.

# 'largest human alteration on earth's surface'

'In 1970, when the last comprehensive surveys of land subsidence were made, subsidence in excess of 1 foot had affected more than 5,200 square miles of irrigable land—one-half the entire San Joaquin Valley (Poland and others, 1975). The maximum subsidence, near Mendota, was more than 28 feet.'

*Galloway, Devin & Riley, F.S.. (1999). San Joaquin Valley, California: Largest human alteration of the Earth's surface. U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1182. 1182. 23-34.*



## Regional Agencies (overseen by state and sometimes feds)

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Water Quality Control Board (District 5, Central Valley)

Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

## Local Level

Water Districts & Agencies

County Boards of Supervisors

County Air Commissioners

City Councils

## Federal

President

U.S. Senate

U.S. House of Representatives

Federal Regulatory & Program

Agencies

- EPA
- Soil Conservation Service
- USDA Research Field Stations
- Federal Marketing Orders

## Also...

State Marketing Orders

University of California/U.C. Cooperative

Extension

State Universities

## State

Governor

State Senate

State Assembly

State Regulatory & Program Agencies

- California Department of Pesticide Regulation
- Department of Agriculture
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire)
- Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- Air Resources Board (ARB)
- California High-Speed Rail Authority
- California State Transportation Authority (Freight, Rail, Transit)
- Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Strategic Growth Council
- Air Resources Board
- Community & Services Development
- California Energy Commission
- Department of Food and Agriculture
- Department of Water Resources
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire)
- Department of Resources, Recycling & Recovery (CalRecycle)

SO MANY PROGRAMS





**the san joaquin valley needs new institutions and forms of governance run by people who live here**



# **What has the env. justice movement accomplished towards land transition?**

- **Created CalEnviroScreen and have driven millions of state dollars into projects under the Greenhouse Gas Reductions Fund**
- **Created the SAFER program to ensure a sustainable source of funding for drinking water projects**
- **Fought for budget set asides for a variety of EJ projects through EJ small grants, SEPs and more**
- **Fought to create a definition of Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher and drive millions of state dollars to BIPOC farmers via Healthy Soils initiative, Beginning Farmer and Farmworker Training, and more**
- **Watchdogging the definitions within the Multi Benefit Land Repurposing program to ensure meaningful benefits**
- **and all the tireless community organizing that has created a powerful fabric of active community participation**





**Many groups are **actively** transitioning land towards sustainability in our region.**

**Still others lack the resources to even engage with the process**



# SJV Agroecology

CCEJN

Wukchumni Farm (pictured)

Foodlink Tulare





**a few  
amazing  
things...**



Ivanhoe  
community  
council, Ivanhoe



TAC Farm, Allensworth



south tower community  
land trust, Fresno



Shady Lakes Mobile Home  
Park, Fresno County



Alianza Ecológica, Porterville



# PEOPLE FOOD AND LAND FOUNDATION





**People Food and Land Foundation started out as  
National Land for People.**

**First founded in 1974, NLP was created to tackle the  
impacts of agricultural land consolidation that we are  
still contending with today**





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